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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 000456

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DOE FOR GPERSON

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TAGS: PGOV PINR KDEM KJUS KCOR NI  
SUBJECT: (S//NF) NIGERIA: PDP POLITICO ON YAR'ADUA  
CORRUPTION, IBB

REF: A. ABUJA 355 B. ABUJA 343 C. ABUJA 320 D. 06 ABUJA 3196

Classified By: PolCouns Walter Pflaumer for Reasons 1.4 (b, c, & d).

¶1. (S//NF) SUMMARY: Isyaku Ibrahim (strictly protect), a founding member of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and PDP Board of Trustees member, but also a strong critic of the party's current ruling group, alleged that President Yar'Adua directed Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation to divert \$57 million to bribe the five justices of the Presidential Election Tribunal to uphold his April 2007 election. Ibrahim claimed that, as of February 18, three of the panel's justices were privately signaling an intention to overturn Yar'Adua's election, and that Attorney General Michael Aondoakaa (and not the justices) in fact drafted the judgment. Ibrahim also asserted that Supreme Court Chief Justice Idris Kutigi told him February 29 the Supreme Court would rule to overturn Yar'Adua's election since it regarded the election as massively rigged and the Tribunal's judgment "embarrassing and pathetic." Ibrahim described the March 8 PDP Convention as a battle of wits between Obasanjo and Yar'Adua, to determine who would emerge as having greater influence within the PDP. Should Obasanjo's choice, Sam Egwu, emerge the PDP National Chair, Ibrahim argued, it would indicate not only that the PDP remains firmly within Obasanjo's grip, but also that Yar'Adua is a "nobody" within the party. Ibrahim also believed Yar'Adua may possibly choose former Senate President Pius Anyim for National Chair. Ibrahim said Yar'Adua has authorized the disbursement of \$3 million to be dispatched across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones to forestall the possibility of Egwu emerging the victor. Ibrahim also told PolOff that Yar'Adua had met with PDP governors March 3 and would again meet with them March 7, to pressure them to vote against Egwu.

¶2. (S//NF) SUMMARY CONT'D: Ibrahim decried Yar'Adua as a "ruthless, cunning" individual who has done nothing for the Nigerian people since he took office last May. While Ibrahim's antipathy for Obasanjo is well-known, he averred that Yar'Adua was even more "dangerous" and "corrupt" than Obasanjo, and suggested that First Lady Turai Yar'Adua, at the possible behest of President Yar'Adua, controlled access to the President and used it to engage in illicit monetary enrichment. Moreover, Ibrahim confided that in mid-January discussions in Paris, he advised former Head of State Ibrahim Babangida to remain outside Nigeria and not attempt a political comeback since he lacked any significant base of support either within the PDP or the military. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (S//NF) BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Isyaku Ibrahim is the only member of the PDP Board of Trustees who is also a founding member of the party. Representative of the old guard of Nigerian politicians, whose counsel and analysis of Nigerian politics is well-respected and highly sought, he is, nonetheless clearly alienated from the groups currently dominating the party. His insistent calls for greater democracy within the PDP, and public denuncements of Obasanjo's efforts to the contrary since 2006 have earned him both enmity and praise. Ibrahim speaks frankly against what he perceives as a political class interested only in monetary enrichment and power. Ibrahim served as a member of the Nigerian parliament in the First Republic and supported Shehu Shagari's ascension to the presidency in 1979. Ibrahim lives a relatively modest lifestyle, and is chair of Nima Manufacturing Industries Ltd. in Abuja. Born in 1938, Ibrahim credits as a great reformer of Nigeria Mallam Aminu Kano. END NOTE.

¶4. (S//NF) Founding member of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and PDP Board of Trustees member Isyaku Ibrahim (strictly protect) spoke with PolOff March 6. Ibrahim claimed that President Yar'Adua instructed the General Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Abubakar Yar'Adua, on February 20 to release \$57 million from the NNPC to Attorney General Aondoakaa. In turn, Ibrahim noted, Aondoakaa would disburse the funds among the five-justice panel of the Presidential Election Tribunal and the Chiefs of Defense and Army Staff. As of February 18, three of the Tribunal's justices, A.A. Jegu, Agube Igwe, and Uwani Abba-Aji, had declared privately an intention to overturn Yar'Adua's election, contending the election was massively rigged and flawed. The hurried February 19 announcement of Presidential Election Tribunal Chair James Ogebe's nomination to the Supreme Court, Ibrahim asserted, was a "calculated and deliberate" attempt to provide cover for Ogebe. With Ogebe's nomination pending approval at the Senate, Ibrahim reasoned, Ogebe could recuse himself from the Tribunal and later claim he had nothing to do with the judgment itself. (The Senate confirmed Ogebe's nomination to the Supreme Court March 6.) As well, Ibrahim alleged the Tribunal judgment had been written by Attorney General Michael Aondoakaa. (Comment: While we have maintained that the provisions of the 2006 Electoral Act necessarily make it difficult for any petitioner to prove that electoral malfeasance "substantially" affected the outcome of elections in 2/3 of Nigeria's 36 states, and that that meant a judgment against Yar'Adua's election was unlikely, this is the first allegation we have heard of Yar'Adua directly interfering in the Presidential Election Tribunal process. End Comment.)

¶5. (S//NF) Ibrahim confided that Supreme Court Chief Justice Idris Kutigi told him over a private lunch February 29 that the Supreme Court will overrule the Tribunal's verdict to uphold Yar'Adua's April 2007 election since, according to Kutigi, the Tribunal's judgment was "embarrassing and pathetic." In such an eventuality, Ibrahim stated, the Constitution may be interpreted to suggest that the Senate President would take over as interim president for a period of no more than 90 days. Ibrahim told PolOff that the opposition All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) and Action Congress have signaled privately that they will not support this reading of the Constitution, particularly if Obasanjo-loyalist and current Senate President David Mark's (PDP) election is upheld at the Court of Appeal. (The Benue State Election Tribunal overturned Mark's election February 23, ordering elections in two local government areas (LGAs) to be re-run. Mark's opponent Usman Abubakar (ANPP) filed a counter-appeal to Mark's appeal March 3, petitioning the court to declare Abubakar the victor since he had received the greater number of votes across seven LGAs (See Ref A).)

¶6. (S) Note: PolOffs witnessed February 26 at the Presidential Election Tribunal that both Attorney General Aondoakaa and Justice Ogebe's son Emmanuel Ogebe walked through to chambers to meet with the justices (see Ref B).

Under law, however, justices must be sequestered during deliberation and especially prior to delivering a judgment. A Reuters foreign correspondent resident in Abuja told PolOff March 2 that a source inside the Villa had read the judgment verbatim to the correspondent February 25 (a day before the actual ruling was delivered). Political Adviser to General Muhammadu Buhari (ANPP), Muhammad Abba (protect), told PolOff February 28 the General had received information from contacts within the Villa on February 24 that the Tribunal would uphold the election. End Note.

**¶7.** (S//NF) Concerning the scheduled March 8 PDP Convention, Ibrahim told PolOff the convention would be a battle between Obasanjo and Yar'Adua to determine who had greater leverage and influence within the party. Should Obasanjo's choice, Sam Egwu, emerge the PDP National Chair, Ibrahim argued, it would indicate not only that the PDP remains firmly within Obasanjo's grip, but also that Yar'Adua is a "nobody" within the party. While Obasanjo had "blackmailed" several incumbent governors and other PDP stalwarts into supporting his choice for National Chairman, former Ebonyi governor Sam Egwu, Ibrahim claimed Yar'Adua also has been actively campaigning for another candidate, possibly former Senate President Pius Anyim. In concert with Kwara governor Bukola Saraki, Ibrahim said, Yar'Adua has authorized the disbursement of \$3 million across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones in an effort to secure support against Obasanjo's choice for national chairman. Ibrahim told PolOff that Yar'Adua had met with PDP governors March 3 and would again meet with them March 7, to pressure them to vote against Obasanjo's choice. Ibrahim also discredited moves by the so-called G-21 and other self-styled "reformists" within the PDP as "business as usual." He claimed that former Senate President Ken Nnamani, alleged leader of the G-21, had entertained ambitions of serving as National Chair of the PDP, but that Ibrahim counseled him against it (given that Obasanjo would "never allow it to happen.") (It was under Ken Nnamani that Obasanjo's 2006 third term bid was quashed by the National Assembly.)

**¶8.** (S//NF) Ibrahim decried Yar'Adua as a "ruthless, cunning" individual who has done nothing for the Nigerian people since he took office last May. While noting his antipathy for Obasanjo, Ibrahim averred that Yar'Adua was, in his estimation, more "dangerous" and "corrupt" than Obasanjo. Though Ibrahim knew Yar'Adua's elder brother Shehu Yar'Adua, and worked under him, he contended that President Yar'Adua lacked the interest and ability to introduce reforms to the economic and political sector. Ibrahim excoriated Yar'Adua for being interested only in "amassing wealth," and claimed that First Lady Hajiya Turai was responsible for Yar'Adua's corrupt dealings. He alleged that Hajiya Turai ensured the presidential jet was routed through Dubai on their return from China last week in order for the First Lady to shop in the UAE. See also Ref C.

**¶9.** (S//NF) Moreover, Ibrahim confided that in mid-January discussions in Paris, he advised former Head of State Ibrahim Babangida (IBB) to remain outside Nigeria and not attempt a political comeback. (IBB returned to Nigeria from an extended stay in Paris March 2.) Ibrahim said he exhorted IBB not to meddle into the affairs of the PDP, since the party was on the verge of collapse, and because IBB's political relevance had significantly waned since Obasanjo came to power in 1999. Ibrahim told PolOff, as of March 6, IBB was not backing any candidate for national chairman. As well, Ibrahim surmised that military rulers, essentially, control the reins of government; however, under civilian rule, power appears more diffuse and less vulnerable to unilateral control. Without the support of the military and a significant segment within the PDP, Ibrahim said he suggested to IBB that the political climate in Nigeria at the present time was simply not conducive for his comeback.

**¶10.** (S//NF) COMMENT: Isyaku Ibrahim is a dispassionate, astute political observer, but whose political projections have not always been on the mark (Ref D); however, he remains a respected and well-informed individual who would most

certainly have the inside track on the goings-on of the PDP, Nigerian politics writ large, and particularly the northern political elite. Ibrahim had also backed Obasanjo during his first term, and is arguably viewed as an important figure in Nigerian politics who has chosen to remain outside elected political office especially since Obasanjo came to power.

Ibrahim's views on Yar'Adua as more corrupt than Obasanjo are puzzling since he claims no association with Umaru Yar'Adua, though he was closely tied to Yar'Adua's elder brother Shehu. The information alleging the First Lady's illicit enrichment activities tracks with what the Mission has reported; however, his assertion that the First Lady is conducting such activities at the behest, or at least with the President's complicity, is particularly troubling. END COMMENT.

SANDERS